



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

With these we shall be perfectly safe, for with disease as an immigrant it is true that forewarned is forearmed in this day and generation.

CYRUS EDSON.

THE FROST CURE.

IT HAS often been observed that great truths are not revealed till Time has prepared the way for their reception ; still it is a curious fact that nearly all the most important steps in the progress of science were half-anticipated by men apparently unconscious of having approached the threshold of a world-changing discovery.

In the morning twilight of the Christian Middle Ages, America was visited twice, and, if we shall believe Professor Karsen, at least three times, by adventurous sea-rovers who hardly thought it worth while to report their skirmishes with the natives of a wild forest-land. Before the end of the eleventh century, printing-presses were used in China for the multiplication of pictures, though not of books ; and about the same time the Mongol invaders of Eastern Europe increased the terror of their arms by means of machines described as "brass tubes, belching forth fire with great noise," but which were certainly not used to discharge balls. Pythagoras vaguely outlines all the essential principles of a system which only two thousand years later was rediscovered by Keppler and Copernicus.

In Turkey the inoculation cure of cutaneous diseases was occasionally practised two centuries before the time of Dr. Jenner, but future generations may consider it a much stranger fact that the nineteenth century more than once so closely approached the discovery of the *Frost Cure*. For medical statistics, read aright, might even now make it doubtful if smallpox, cholera, and yellow fever combined have proved half as destructive of human life as a delusion which a hygienic reformer describes as the "Cold Fallacy,"—the habit of ascribing all sorts of ailments to the influence of a low temperature. The air of the outdoor world, of the woods and hills, he says, is, *par excellence*, a product of nature, and, therefore, the presumptive cause of innumerable evils. Cold air has become the general scapegoat of sinners against nature. When Don Juan's knee-joints begin to weaken he suspects himself of having "taken cold." If an old glutton has a cramp in the stomach, he ascribes it to an incautious exposure on coming home from a late supper. Toothache is supposed to result from "draughts;" croup, neuralgia, mumps, etc., from the "raw March wind." When children have been forced to sleep in unventilated bedrooms till their lungs putrefy with their own exhalations, the *mater-familias* reproaches herself with the most sensible thing she has been doing for the last hundred nights—"opening the windows last August, when the air was so stifling."

Even old-school physicians begin to suspect that "the danger of cold air currents has been greatly overrated;" but what if the demon of popular delusion should turn out to be not only a harmless sprite, but a minister of mercy—the most harmless as well as the most powerful disinfectant, and Nature's panacea for the disorders of the human organism ?

Is Time "preparing the way" for that truth by half-way discoveries ?

Priessnitz, the founder of hydropathy, managed to cure obstinate cases of dyspepsia by cold shower-baths ; but it is highly probable that the same purpose could be attained, in a more natural and much less disagreeable manner, by the inhalation of fresh, cold air.

Mountaineers and the natives of high latitudes are almost indigestion-proof, but dyspeptics can save themselves the trouble of a trip to the Norwegian Highlands by the simple plan of sleeping, snugly covered, in the immediate neighborhood of a wide-open window, and imbibing large draughts of the cool night air. In cold weather a few hours will thus suffice to stimulate the torpid organism; but even in midsummer, each night can be made to undo the mischief of the preceding day. So far from being unpleasant, that method of refrigeration can become a positive luxury; each lung full of cool air revives the languid system, as cold water refreshes the parched palate. On the other hand, it might be questioned if the father of hydropathy ever really came to relish his own prescription. A Canadian bear will make a wide circuit, or pick his way over the ice-floes like the hegira heroine of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," rather than swim a lake in cold weather. Baptist missionaries do not report many revivals before June.

Ice has become a substitute for less harmless antiseptics in many hospitals, and a few months ago a Spanish physician, of Santiago de Cuba, proved by a series of triumphant experiments that yellow fever patients can be cured in ice-lined bedrooms. This *camera polar* ("polar chamber") was furnished with double walls and floors, the interspaces being filled with a mixture of sand and blocks of sea-ice, *i. e.*, common sea-water frozen by the usual evaporation process of our ice factories. Vessels with chloride of lime were put here and there to absorb moisture and noxious gases—a combination of artificial contrivances by which its inventor proposed to "re-establish the atmospheric conditions of the Arctic zone, where a dry, low temperature prevents the development of climatic fevers." That idea is an indisputable step in the right direction, but there is more than one reason to suspect that the effective element of the *camera polar* plan was cold air, pure and simple. Ordinary water, frozen in the usual way, would have answered the same purpose, and the dryness of frosty air is not an indispensable condition of its efficiency. In the humid bottom lands of the Mississippi Valley the first good night-frost puts a stop to climatic fevers, without the aid of sea-salt or chloride of lime.

Europe and North America have for years recorded the progress of a phenomenon, which a friend of mine calls the "Siberia mystery,"—the northward exodus of the more enterprising elements of population. During the last two thousand years the centres of civilization have moved at least eight hundred miles nearer the poles; the balance of political and intellectual power has been transferred from Rome and Athens to Berlin, London, St. Petersburg, Boston, and New York. Within the limits of our own national territory a similar current is setting towards the frozen tablelands of our northern border. The overpopulation of the sunnier latitudes cannot explain the enigma, for there is more elbowroom in the Elysian terrace lands of the southern Alleghanies than on many bleak prairies of the far Northwest. The key of the mystery may be found in the stimulating influence of a low temperature. Frost is an antidote, and greatly modifies the penalties of our manifold sins against the health laws of Nature. It enables gluttons to digest greasy-made dishes; it helps toppers to survive excesses that would kill a native of the tropics in a few weeks. It also counteracts the chronic indolence of exhausted constitutions. In the uplands of the Black Hills a squatter is not apt to neglect his woodpile. In "Duluth, the solid" (lake often solidly frozen to a depth of eight feet), a business man can shift with a minimum of after-dinner rest. The efficacy of the plan is undeniable, but with

open bedroom windows and less superheated tea, its benefits might be enjoyed nearer home.

The "mountain-cure," American physicians call the last expedient in cases of far-gone consumption. The patient, wardrobe, library, and all, is transported to a tent-camp in the upper Adirondacks, where the temperature in October often sinks to fifteen degrees below zero. Blankets are allowed *ad libitum*, but no stove-fires at night, and even in daytime highland blizzards may oblige the convalescent to take refuge under his blankets. Few breeds of tubercle-microbes have been able to resist that prescription for more than a month, and in the course of a winter such remnants of pulmonary substance as the invalid may have saved from the influence of city life will get expurgated effectively enough to remain in fair working order for years to come.

Those remarkable results have been variously ascribed to the purity of mountain air, or to that mysterious "allotropic form of oxygen called ozone;" but again, there is a probability amounting to what lawyers would term a violent presumption, that they are simply due to the protracted influence of cold air. The prevalence of pulmonary diseases decreases with every mile further north on the road from the factory districts of the English border to the pastoral regions of sea-girt Scotland, and next to the natives of Senegambia, where indoor work is almost unknown, the Norwegians, Icelanders, and the Yakuts, of Northern Siberia, enjoy the most complete immunity from consumption. The severe frosts of the Arctic regions counteract even the filthy habits of the hovel-dwelling Esquimaux, and whalers in an atmosphere not specially distinguished for its purity or abundance of ozone manage to get the better of incipient tubercles by frequent exposure to icy gales.

The suggestiveness of those facts would, perhaps, have been less persistently ignored if the study of the symptoms and proximate causes of consumption had not tended to divert attention from its original causes and the means of its prevention. The description of "vermiform microbes" and the methods of coloring their semi-transparent tissue certainly attest the ingenuity of the Breslau experimenter, and his disciples are perhaps right in pronouncing him the first analytical pathologist of modern times, but their pompous demands upon the gratitude of consumptives often remind one of that speculative philosopher who tried to console a severely wounded soldier with the reflection that, "Pain, my friend, is really nothing but a reversion in the molecular action of the sympathetic nerves connecting the brain with the extra-cerebral nervous termini."

The Frost-cure doctrine is, indeed, a logical, and, practically, by far the most important, correlative of the "germ theory of disease." A few years ago the proprietor of a Hot-Springs sanitarium advertised his establishment with the motto: "Warmth is life; cold is death." In a modified form that aphorism may become the keystone-principle of sanitary philosophy: Warmth is life; cold, even in a moderate degree, is death—not to man—but to myriads of disease-germs far more sensitive to changes of temperature.

FELIX L. OSWALD, M. D.

A PHASE OF PRACTICAL PHILANTHROPY.

MAHOMET set a tolerably good example when the mountain did not move, and charitable people who would help the workingman are beginning to follow it. They have come to feel that they can no longer walk about in